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R E M A R K S

On the HISTORY of

F I N G A L,

And other POEMS of

O S S I A N:

Translated by Mr. MACPHERSON.

In a LETTER to

The Right Honourable the LORD L—.

By FERD^o. WARNER, L.L.D.

Nemo non Gloriam ultra verum tulit.

SEN. Epif.

L O N D O N :

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R E M A R K S

On the HISTORY of

F I N G A L, &c.

My LORD,

IN the present Decay of Literature which is advancing upon us very fast, for Reasons which it may not be difficult to assign, tho' they are too delicate to be mentioned, every Reader of Taste must be delighted with the Publication of a Work, in which there is a display of Genius equal to the most celebrated amongst the ancients. If your Lordship should be of opinion with MR. ADDISON and some other Philosophers, " that " Men of great Genius in the same way of " writing, seldom rise up singly, but at certain Periods of time appear together, and " in a Body"; another Observation may be perhaps full as just, that I don't know has been made by any one, that when a Genius for a particular and distinguish'd Species of writing is once become extinct, it is never

afterwards to be recovered by the greatest Men. Whether this Observation is strictly true or no I will not take upon me to determine: but it is the best Reason that I can give, why no Modern Age has been capable of forging the Writings of the Ancients; and why the Poems of OSSIAN, tho' at first suspected by your Lordship and some other learned men, are undoubtedly the Production of very high Antiquity.

At my Return from Ireland very lately, I found the Publick in Possession of MR. MAC-PHERSON'S Translation of these Poems out of the Gaulic Language; which, from the Specimen in the Fragments published two years ago, had been for some Time expected with great Impatience. As soon as I had the Honour to see your Lordship, you laid a great Stress on my reading this Piece with some Attention; not so much on account of the Poetry which your Lordship then acknowledged to be inimitable, as because the Book has an immediate Relation to the History of Ireland which you know I am compiling.

In Obedience to your Commands, My Lord, full of the Idea I had conceived of the Poetry from the Fragments, and full of Expectations of meeting with something that would throw Light upon those ancient Times, I sat down to it with great Eagerness. But tho' I had all the Delight which I promised myself in the perusal of the Poetry, yet I was greatly disappointed in my other Expectations.

pectations. Your Lordship will suppose that I don't mean from the Translation, of which I am not a Judge even if the Original had been printed with it: And notwithstanding what was said of it in an Advertisement which came out at Dublin whilst I was there, I am more inclined to think it is well executed than deficient or incorrect; especially if we allow for the different powers in the two languages.

My Disappointment, My Lord, arose from another quarter. Your Lordship had given it me as your Opinion, that it contained the genuine History of an Expedition into Ireland; of which you may remember that forming a Judgment from the Fragments I then expressed a Doubt: And as your Lordship's is also the Opinion of the Translator, upon which he has grounded many Reflexions, to the Injury of the Irish History, and to the Honour of his own Country; you will excuse my laying my Reasons before your Lordship in this public manner for combating this Opinion, and for doing Justice to a People whose Antiquities are misrepresented. As I am a Native of England without any Connexions with the Irish, and consequently have no Bias to the one or the other Country, my Indifference in the Dispute must stand confessed; and as I have for a considerable Time past made the Antiquities of Ireland my particular Study, in order to compile a general History of that Kingdom,

Kingdom, I hope I may be allowed in some measure qualified to decide it.

I have nothing to say, My Lord, to the spurious Compositions of some of the Irish Bards under the Name of OSSIAN, which the Translator mentions in his Preface. But as he hath observed in the same Paragraph, “that
“succeeding Generations magnified or varied
“the Traditions founded on these Composi-
“tions, in proportion as they were swayed
“by Credulity or Design,” why may we not suppose, what the Irish Bards, he says, have given a Belief to in that Country, that FINGAL was of Irish Extraction, notwithstanding what is said in the Poems of OSSIAN? Why may not the Caledonians, “swayed by Credulity or De-
“sign,” lay a Claim to this Hero for the Honour of their own Country which they were not entitled to? The Name of Fingal is the Name of a particular District in Ireland: And if what I heard there is true, that many manuscript Copies of this epic Poem are to be met with in the hands of the Irish, of which there is not One in Scotland—for MR. MACPHERSON I hear owns that he took it all from the Mouth of an old North British Bard—then, My Lord, to speak impartially upon this Circumstance, I think the Irish have full as good a Title to the Honour of this Poem as the Caledonian Britons. This however may be best determined by the Translation which is advertis’d at Dublin to be making ready for the Press from an authentic Manuscript: and in the mean time I shall lay such Reasons before
your

your Lordship, as may possibly convince you, and every other impartial Person, that the Hero and the Poem are both from Ireland.

I believe, My Lord, there never was “ an Irish Senachy or Bard who was so little acquainted with the Antiquities of their Nation,” as not to know that the Inhabitants of North-Britain were derived from Ireland : but yet it does not therefore follow, that if FINGAL was really a Native of that Island they should be very willing to yield, or indifferent to have it believed, that he was a Caledonian ? Indeed it appears to me that they have a much better Reason for contesting this Point, if there are sufficient Grounds for it, than the People of North-Britain. Because tho’ the intellectual as well as the military Abilities of the Great Men of both Nations shone thro’ all the Ages of Antiquity after they were once known to the World, yet the Irish, thro’ a Series of unhappy Accidents, were driven to other Countries where their Abilities are still confessed, or dwindled away to nothing. There are no Traces left, except in the Sonnets of their Bards and some of their ancient Records, of its ever having been a Kingdom superior in Learning to the rest of Europe ; as we know from many foreign Testimonies that once it was : And if we except the better Sort of their Gentry who have had an Education suitable to their Rank — which in comparison are but a Handful — All the present Genius and Learning of that Island, is to be looked for
only

only amongst the English Race, who have possessed it since the Conquest. But this your Lordship knows is not at all the Case with respect to Scotland. As no Nation in Europe hath produced Men of greater and more distinguished Abilities in the early Ages than that Country, so I believe you will own that it continues still to produce them. The Senate and the Bar — to descend no lower — have afforded flagrant Proofs of this Assertion in our own Time and Memory. It is of no moment therefore to this Northern Province, which still keeps up the Reputation of her illustrious Ancients in Eloquence and War and Politicks, whether the Poems of OSSIAN are the Compositions or not of a Caledonian Bard. But to Ireland, which hath little else to shew as the Remains of the great Genius of her original Countrymen, it is a matter of some Consequence to have it believed to be the Production of an Irish Bard.

Having examined all that MR. MACPHERSON says in the Preface which I think bears hard upon Ireland without sufficient Reason, I shall now proceed to his Dissertation on the Antiquities of the Poem. If he did not take a Pleasure in every little Criticism that seems to lessen the Irish Nation, He would not have mentioned the account of the Britons being the Founders of it “ as a more probable Story than the idle “ Fables of Milesian and Galician Colonies.” For no Historian of Ireland of any Name hath ever denied that it was peopled first from Britain: but tho’ this, My Lord, is allowed, does
it

it therefore follow that it was peopled from Britain only? Might not some other Colonies from Spain, in an age or two after, migrate into Ireland, and get possession of it? This is what the Antiquities of Ireland all assert, and this I shall shew in the History from many concurring Circumstances is not an *idle Fable*. It were to be wished that the Translator had been a little better versed in the Irish History than he is before he attempted to criticise it thus severely. It were to be wished too, My Lord, that the Bards who have handed down these Poems had been a little more accurate and conformable to the Irish History than they have been in the Names of the chief Heroes. Even FINGAL, from which the Epic Poem is denominated, is not the Name of a Man in any Antiquities or History of that Nation; and the Chief who is celebrated under that Name in the Poems,—about whom too many Circumstances concur to admit a Doubt of his being the same — is always called FIONN, or FINN as it is pronounced. In the same manner, I must observe to your Lordship, the Name of the other Hero is corrupted. The same Man who in the Poems is called CUCHULLIN, in the Irish is called CONGCULLION, in the Latin CUCULANDUS, and, — which is pretty remarkable — the Translator Himself in his Preface to the Fragments calls him CUCHUL- LAID. But in order to prevent Confusion and mistakes, I shall conform myself at present to the Names given them in the Poems.

With regard to the Invasion of Ireland from Scandinavia, which is the Subject of Fingal, your Lordship will give me leave to observe to you, that there is no mention made in any History of an Invasion of this Island, from the coming in of the Milesians which was above a Thousand years before, 'till the Irruption of the Danes which was above Four hundred years after, the Æra of the Poem : and this alone is an Objection to the genuine History of the Poem, which in my opinion is not easily to be got over. As to FINGAL, it must be allowed that his Death is placed in the year MR. M. mentions : but then I must inform your Lordship, that the Irish Antiquities take no notice of his being a Caledonian Chief, but say that he was Commander of the Irish Militia* : and it is scarcely probable that they would have given the Command of that famous Body, which was the established standing Army of the kingdom, to one of another Nation—supposing them to be ever such near Relations and Allies—when they had so many Heroes of their own of such distinguished Valour. Your Lordship will be pleased to observe before I go any further, that if I touch upon some Circumstances and drop them, and then resume them again in other places, that this Irregularity is occasioned by the Propriety of answering the Translator's Notes, in the Order in which they are scattered thro' the Book.

* Ogyg. p. 153. Keating Edit. 1723. p. 133.

Where He met with the History which he hath given us of the Bards,* as no Authority is quoted for it, I don't know: but it will surely serve for those of Ireland full as well, if not better, than those of his own Country; and it is not improbable that he might collect the Substance of it from the Antiquities which he holds so cheap. Be this however as it may; I am sure it will suit the state of Ireland exactly, to say of it as he does of Scotland, "that
 " if other Nations that had been often over-
 " run by Enemies, and had sent abroad and
 " received Colonies, could for many Ages
 " preserve by Oral Tradition their Laws and
 " Histories uncorrupted, it is much more
 " probable that the ancient IRISH, a People
 " so free of Intermixture with Foreigners, and
 " so strongly attached to the Memory of their
 " Ancestors, had the Works of their Bards
 " handed down with great Purity†." MR. M.
 hath owned in two pages after, "that this
 " complete Work now printed — meaning
 " Fingal — would soon have shared the Fate
 " of the rest:" and this confirms what I have heard, that He took it all from the Mouth of an old Highland Bard, or a Bard in some of the Isles. But then how comes it to pass, that there are manuscript Copies of this Poem in Ireland; a Translation from one of which is preparing for the Press as I have already mentioned?

* Dissertation p. 10 — 13.

† Dissertation p. 13.

Your Lordship will observe that in these Remarks, I have no Intention to say a Word in Derogation of the Poetical merit, or of the Translation, of this Collection. If the Epic Poem had not a single Word of true History for its Foundation — and indeed it has very little—it would, as your Lordship well knows, be just as good a Poem as tho' it was all genuine History: and I believe that MR. M. has done as much Justice to the Original in his Translation as an English Dress is capable of. Had he therefore confin'd Himself to this Province, and had not your Lordship who is so good a Judge of these Affairs adopted what he says of the Irish History, which has probably been done by most other people, Your Lordship would have had no Trouble of this kind from me, and the Editor might quietly have enjoyed the Praises which I think are due to him, and which I heartily wish him, for the Acquisition of these Poems to the Republick of Letters. The Respect and Good Will I bear him upon this Account, would most certainly have restrained me from these public Animadversions; if I had not thought it Necessary for me, who am writing the Irish History, to obviate the many Prejudices which he has stirred up against such a Work. But I shall not descend to the mean and illiberal Abuse which is so much practised: and tho' I differ entirely from MR. M. in his Account of the Heroes of the Epic Poem, yet I shall take care to differ from him as becomes a Gentleman and a Scholar.

I am

I am very sorry, My Lord, that He has not once quoted an Authority for the Historical part of his Notes upon these Poems, that we might have been enabled to judge how far the Accounts may be depended on. But from the Histories or Antiquities of Ireland, where the Scene of the Epic Poem is laid, I believe I may venture to say that he had them not. As to the Hero CUCHULLIN*, who makes a principal Figure in it, He is mentioned indeed as a Hero who was killed in the twenty seventh year of his age. But then it is not said by any Writer, that He was of North British Extract; on the contrary, his Birth and Parentage in Ireland are recorded†, and it is only said that he went into Scotland to improve himself in the Exercise of Arms, under a Lady famous at that time for her military Skill and Bravery‡. But of this Chief it is said, that He was Twenty Five years old at the Birth of CHRIST||; which does not synchronise at all with the Epoch of FINGAL, or with any of the other Heroes, or with any one of the Events in this famous Poem. Whether the Poem, or the Irish History, which gives a particular detail of his Birth and Death, bids the fairest for the genuine Account of this “General or “Chief of the Irish Tribes”§, I shall leave

* Fingal, p. 1.

† Ogyg. p. 127. 280. 1.

‡ Keat. p. 95.

|| Ogy. p. 127.

§ Pref. to the Fragments.

your Lordship to determine. But first permit me to observe, that SOALTA and not SEMO, as MR. M. has it, is said to be the Father of this Hero, and EMERIA not BRAGELA to be his Wife*. The Irish Historians would scarcely have been so particular as they have been in giving his own and his Wives genealogy, and in recording the Circumstances of his Death, if He had not been a Native of that Country. Nay it does not seem credible to me, if every other Circumstance did not contradict it, that in those days of Heroism the Irish Chiefs should make a Caledonian the Guardian to their Monarch. The Annals of Tygernach, which are an authentic Record, relate that his Death at Twenty seven years of Age, was owing to LUGADE the Grandson of CARBRE NIAFEAR; that at seven years of Age he was initiated into the Order of Knighthood; and that at Seventeen years of Age he was in the Battle of Cualgna, in which he slew FERDIA the Son of Daman, which was Eight years before the Incarnation†. Many are the Exploits indeed which are recorded of this famous Champion; but they all relate to the Times which synchronize with his Birth mentioned above. Your Lordship will see therefore, that it is impossible to get over the Difficulty of making this Hero, even if he were a North Briton, a Champion for the Irish in the Reign of CORMAC, which was not till Two Hundred and Fifty years after. Neither was CORMAC in his Minority

* Ogy. p. 280. 1.

† Ogy. p. 280. 1.

when he ascended the Throne, nor CARBAR his Enemy who supplanted him, but his Son to whom he resigned it; as I shall presently make appear. If any one after this Account, which is taken from the best Irish Writers who have had Recourse to their ancient Manuscripts, can receive the History in these Poems and MR. M. Explanation of it for the genuine History of those times in Ireland, I shall judge him qualified to swallow the grossest Fables in the Gaulic Language for true History.

It is impossible, My Lord, to proceed any further in detecting the Fictions of these Poems, without endeavouring to invalidate an Objection that we meet with in the Note in the second page; which is intended to call in Question not only the Antiquities, but also the very Being of Ireland as a Nation for any considerable Time before the Christian Æra. The Translator having informed us, that on the first Intelligence of an Invasion from Scandinavia, CUCHULLIN had sent to implore the Assistance of FINGAL, immediately subjoins, “ We
“ may conclude from CUCHULLIN’s apply-
“ ing so early for foreign Aid, that the
“ Irish then were not so numerous as they
“ have since been; which is a great Pre-
“ sumption against the high Antiquities of
“ that People*.” In this Conclusion your Lordship will perceive there are two Abiur-

* Fing. p. 2.

dities which stare one so much in the Face, that it seems incredible they could have fallen from the Pen of so ingenious a Man as Mr. M. if he had not been blinded by his Prejudices against the innocent Antiquities of the poor Irish. In the first place, it is allowed by every good Historian even of North Britain, and by the Translator Himself, that the Scottish people were originally derived from Ireland: And if they were so numerous at this Time, as to afford a considerable Aid to their Irish Ancestors and Allies, we may conclude, I believe your Lordship will allow, that the Irish were a more numerous and a more ancient people still. Besides, What sort of Presumption is it against the high Antiquities of that people, that they were not so numerous Fifteen Hundred years ago as they have been since? But in the next place I would ask in answer to this Conclusion of the Translator's, Whether because we sent for Aid from HOLLAND and HESSE upon the Rumour of an Invasion lately from the French, will it therefore follow that we are but thinly peopled, and that we had not been a Nation many Hundred Years? Or to come still nearer the Point, if the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, upon the Apprehension of an Invasion at this Time from Spain, should send, as the News papers say he has done, for some Succours from hence, will it therefore follow that the Island has been inhabited but a few Centuries? Your Lordship sees, that if this Conclusion proves
any

any thing to the Purpose Mr. M. brought it for, it will prove too much; it will prove that the Irish have no Antiquities at all, and that the Country is in a manner but lately peopled; which we all know to be False. But in order to do him Justice, as he did not draw this Conclusion from the Fact only above recited, I must observe further to your Lordship, that he adds, “ We have the Testimony of TACITUS “ that One Legion only was thought sufficient in the Time of AGRICOLA, to “ reduce the whole island under the Roman “ Yoke; which would not probably have “ been the Case, had the Island been inhabited for any number of Centuries before”. Not to insist on the small *Omission* of a moderate Number of Auxiliaries — “ modicis auxiliis” — which your Lordship must know that TACITUS adds to the Legion, it may be sufficient to observe, that if this one Legion and some Auxiliaries may be supposed to be Half as many, as the Two Legions and some Auxiliaries which CÆSAR carried with him in his first Expedition into Britain, as no doubt they may, then according to the Calculation which hath been given of Them, the Legion and some Auxiliaries would have amounted to Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Foot, and Two Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty Horse. A very formidable Number truly! And tho’ the Island has been now inhabited about Three Thousand Years, yet I should not
D wonder,

wonder, if on the Intelligence of an Invasion by such a Body of Forces, the Irish should apply to us for Succour. But yet after all, My Lord, notwithstanding this Boast, AGRICOLA might have found himself mistaken as CÆSAR did; and had He made the Experiment with his One Legion and some Auxiliaries, I believe, as lately peopled as MR. M. imagines the Island then to have been, it would have ended as CÆSAR's first Expedition did. It is certain that the Romans never made an Attempt upon that Island; and they had too many convincing Proofs of the Valour and Conduct of the Irish, in the Assistance which they gave the Picts against them, ever to think of it.

In order to throw a Lustre over the principal Hero of his Piece, your Lordship must have observed the Translator tells us, "that FINGAL is celebrated by the Irish Historians for his Wisdom in making Laws, his poetical Genius, and his Foreknowledge of Events, and that O FLAHERTY goes so far as to say, that FINGAL's Laws were extant in his own Time*." Now tho' I am not able to find any thing like this said of him in the Irish History, yet without any hesitation I will take MR. MACPHERSON's word for this Assertion; because if he has given it us on his own Knowledge, tho' he has not mentioned the Work he took it from, I dare say it is true. But then I

* Fing. p. 132.

hope I shall be excused from assenting to what is added about the Laws of FINGAL from O FLAHERTY; because that Author being named I have turned to his Work; and it is somewhat extraordinary, that Mr. M. should be so quick sighted as to see what is not there, and so blind as not to see what is there; to see that the Laws of FINGAL were extant in O FLAHERTY's Time, which is not said, and not to see what is in the same Sentence, where that is supposed to be, that He was the Son in Law of CORMAC. But the One made for his purpose, and the other was directly against it: for if he was his Son in Law, all the Story of his coming from Scotland to aid him in his Minority is contradicted. Your Lordship shall see the whole passage below, and you may then judge for yourself*. Had this Assertion however been a Matter of Fact, the Observation which is to be made upon it in my opinion is, that if FINGAL had been only a Caledonian Chief, his Laws would scarcely have been brought to Ireland, enrolled amongst their own, and preserved down to the days of O FLAHERTY: And therefore if we are to draw any Conclusion

* *Cælestia etiam Judicia tulerunt Morannus Carbrei regis Hiberniæ filius, & sub Feradaco rege item Hiberniæ supremus Judex, Cormacus rex Hiberniæ (cujus & Carbrei filii, & in regno Successoris apud Acoil juxta Temoriam in legem lucubrationes etiamnum extant) Fithilus Cormaci regis Judex, & Finus Cuballi filius Cormaci ejusdem militiæ prefectus, et gener. Ogyg. p. 217.*

from this Circumstance, in favour of either of those Countries, I must own, My Lord, I should be inclined to suppose, that this FINGAL and his Family were strictly speaking Irish Heroes. I am sure it is impossible for any one who reads the Irish Histories to form any other Notion: and the Qualifications for Admission into the Militia, and the Rules to be observed after it, prescribed by the House of FINGAL — for his Father and Grandfather had the Command of them before him — these are extant at this day; and I shall give them in my History of that Kingdom.

I am very ready to own My Lord, “ that Tradition throws a considerable Light on “ the History of Ireland:” but then I must beg leave to say, that it is not the Tradition of the Highland Bards, or of those of the Isles, if MR. M. writes from Them; for His Account throws the whole Irish History of those Times into Confusion. For instance; it is so far from being true, that CORMAC a Minor succeeded his Father ART upon the Throne—as the Translator says*—that there was an Intervention of two other Monarchs before he attained to the Royal Dignity, LUGAD MAC CON, and FERGIUS of the black Teeth†. I shall not repeat the Anachronism of CUCHULLIN’s being Guardian of the Realm in the Minority of CORMAC; but it is proper to acquaint your Lordship, that

* Fing. p. 143.

† Ogy. p. 327. 331. Keating p. 101. 2.

he was not in Fact in his Minority at the Death of his Father, and that it was impossible he could have been a Minor King. For it was the established Law of the Succession in Ireland, that none should be born a King, or advanced to the Royal Dignity till of mature age* ; neither is there a single Instance to the Contrary throwout the whole Irish Monarchy : So that all the Tradition built upon that Circumstance is absolutely fabulous. Moreover, it is so far from being true, “ that many set
 “ up for themselves, and anarchy and confu-
 “ sion reigned, and at last CORMAC was taken
 “ off, no body knew how†,” — as the Editor has informed us — that his Reign was undisturbed by any Competitors, and in the Magnificence of his Court, in his Benevolence, in his Prudence, his Erudition, and the Fame of his great Atchievements, he far exceeded all the Monarchs of Ireland that had gone before him. Having reigned in all this Glory Three and Twenty Years, being deprived of one of his eyes, which according to the Custom of those Times made it improper for him to hold the Reins of Government any longer, he delivered them up to his Son ; and in his Retreat is said to have renounced Idolatry, and to have owed his Death to the Bones of a Salmon with which he was choked‡. In short,

* Ogy. p. 44.

† Fing. p. 143.

‡ Ogy. p. 336. 7. 340. Keat. 140. 1.

My Lord, it is so far from being true*, as the Poem and the Notes acquaint us, that Carbre or CARBAR was one of the Competitors for the Throne in the Time of CORMAC, who having defeated all his Rivals became sole Monarch of Ireland, that He was his own Son with whom he lived happily, and for whose Use, whilst he was on the Throne, CORMAC in his Retirement wrote his Book of Advice to Kings†. Nor is there a Word of True History in what follows, of CARBAR's inviting OSCAR in a friendly manner to a Feast to have a pretext for killing him, of their quarrelling at it, and of FINGAL's coming from Scotland, defeating the Friends of CARBAR, and re-establishing the Family of CORMAC in the Possession of the Kingdom§. The Death of FINGAL alone, which was Four years after CARBAR mounted the Throne, and Fourteen Years before the Engagement he had with OSCAR‡, sets all this Tradition aside, and shews what sort of History these Poems exhibit of those Times in Ireland.

Tho' it must be granted therefore that in other Particulars besides the Age CUCHULIN lived in, " the Accounts of KEATING " and O FLAHERTY coincide pretty nearly " with OSSIAN's Poems and the Traditions

* Fing. p. 144.

† Keat. p. 141.

§ Fing. p. 144.

‡ Ogy. p. 341.

“ of the Highlands and Isles,” yet it is only in the Particulars relating to CUCHULLIN. In one other Particular however relating to him of no small Moment they differ widely, his Extraction and Descent; for the Former make him Irish: And by the way, let me observe to your Lordship, it is a very extraordinary thing, that in those Days of Heroism when Ireland abounded with such Champions, CUCHULLIN should be the most famous in the Irish Poems and Traditions — as MR. M. says, and says truly — if He had not been One of their own Countrymen. But in all the Particulars relating to FINGAL, and OSSIAN, to CORMAC, CARBAR, and OSCAR, except the Times they lived in, it must be observed they are so far from coinciding, that they scarcely agree in a single Circumstance. Nay so far is that material Circumstance, upon which the Hinge of the Epic Poem turns — FINGAL’s coming from Scotland to the Aid of CORMAC — from coinciding with the Account of those Historians, that they don’t say a Word of any such thing: And how should they, when He was the Commander of their own Militia? On the contrary O FLAHERTY tells us, that This same CORMAC sent a great Fleet into North Britain, by which infesting their Coasts for three Years he acquired the Government over Albania*.

* Ogy. p. 335.

The Translator, My Lord, hath told us in his Note on the Age of CUCHULLIN, where he owns that the Irish Historians have placed him in the First Century, “ that He
 “ has given his Reasons for fixing him in the
 “ Third in the Dissertation prefixed to this
 “ Collection*.” But tho’ I have read the Dissertation over several Times with some Attention, yet I am not able to find a Word relating to it. He hath given his Reasons indeed for fixing FINGAL and the Epoch of the Poem in the Third Century; and in the Third Century the Irish History and Antiquities all speak of FINGAL and his Heroes. But is this, My Lord, a Proof that CUCHULLIN lived at That Time also, tho’ mentioned as a Contemporary and Ally of FINGAL in the Poem? This Proof, My Lord, if we examine it, I apprehend will stand pretty nearly thus : The Poem contains the genuine History of these Times in Ireland, because the Epoch of FINGAL and OSSIAN synchronize with the Irish History of those Heroes; but the Age in which CUCHULLIN lived, is by all that History misplaced about Two Hundred and Fifty Years, because it does not coincide with the Poem. Upon this admirable Refutation we are to give up the Whole Irish History, and subscribe our Assent to these Poems of OSSIAN, as the genuine History of those Times in Ireland.

* Fing. p. 152.

But My Lord, this very Anachronism itself, on the side of the Poems, especially as it is corroborated with so many other Contradictions to the History, shews incontestibly in my Opinion, that tho' the Poems have taken their Heroes from the Irish History, yet that, like other Poems, they are worked up without any Regard to Truth as it pleased the Fancy of the Composer. A Manuscript History of Ireland in my Possession, after giving a particular Account of FINGAL's Descent, his Inheritance, his Acquisitions from the King of Leinster, and his great Military Command, immediately adds, "but the Reader must not expect to meet here, with such stories of Him and his Heroes, as the Vulgar Irish have — for they are no other than Commanders which their Poets penned in after days in their Names — but only what I find mentioned of them in their Histories." I have given your Lordship this Quotation in the Writers Words for the sake of Exactness: and tho' it is poorly enough expressed, yet it is easy to gather from it, that the Names of FINGAL and his Heroes having been much celebrated by Tradition, some of the Bards who lived when these days of Heroism were over, took Their Names for the Champions and Leaders in their Sonnets: And if the Poem Fingal is not one of these composed in this Manner, and mutilated after by the Caledonians who were "swayed by Credulity or Design," to give the Honour of the Heroes to their own Country — as I am very

apt to believe — then it was originally composed by a Caledonian Bard with the same Intent. They have evidently stolen the Heroes, and why not steal the Poem? But I suspend my final Determination of this Point, till I see the Translation from the Irish Manuscript above mentioned. Innumerable Fables of FINGAL and his Heroes, such as these of OSSIAN'S — perhaps not so well and so artistly worked up — abound still among the Descendents of that famous People. But Who, My Lord, accepts them for the History of the Times, except those who have red no other? Even the Bards who wrote them never meant it. This reminds me of an Anecdote which was told me by my Friend the late MR. Justice BURNET, and which perhaps your Lordship may not have heard. The Duke of MARLBOROUGH talking over some Point of English History once with Bishop BURNET, and advancing some Anachronisms and strange Matters of Fact, his Lordship, in a great Astonishment at this new History, enquired of His Grace where He had met with it. The Duke, equally surpris'd on His side to be ask'd That Question by so knowing a Man in History as the Bishop, replied, Why dont you remember? It is in the only English History of those Times that ever I red, in SHAKESPEAR'S Plays. I leave the Pertinency of this Anecdote to the Point in Question, to make its own Apology for my introducing it.

Of the same Fabrick, My Lord, with the rest, is the Whole story of the Poem *Temora**: CORMAC was not murdered in his youth by CARBAR, nor indeed murdered at all, but owed his Death, as it hath been said, to the Bone of a Salmon. CARBAR was not his Enemy who openly set up for himself, but his Son whom he loved and resigned his Crown to, and he had no such Brother as CATHMOR. I am again obliged, My Lord, to lament, that MR. MACPHERSON would not vouchsafe to quote One Authority for the Accounts with which he hath been pleased to explain the Poems. I am likewise sorry that he has put me under the Necessity of so often calling in Question the Veracity of these Accounts. But Truth, My Lord, is superior to all other Considerations: And as the Translator has made very free with the Irish Historians, whom he directly charges at second hand with creating Facts, or at least adopting Traditions for real Facts with Design†, so I hope He will excuse Me, for giving my Reasons in decent Language, why I believe he has been imposed upon unwittingly by the erroneous Traditions of his North British Bards. After a formal Story of the War which had been carried on between FINGAL and CATMOR—a Man in the Moon, at least no where else as Brother of CARBAR but in the Poets Fancy—the Trans-

* Fingal, p. 172.

† Fingal, p. 173.

lator proceeds to inform us, “ that the Irish
 “ Traditions relate the Affair in another light,
 “ and exclaim against FINGAL for appointing
 “ Thirty Judges, or rather Tyrants at Te-
 “ mora for regulating the Affairs of Ireland.
 “ They pretend to enumerate many Acts of
 “ Oppression committed by those Judges ; and
 “ affirm that both They and a Part of FIN-
 “ GAL’s Army which was left in Ireland to
 “ enforce their Laws, were as last expelled
 “ the Kingdom. Thus the Irish Traditions,
 “ say the Historians of that Nation*.” A
 great deal of Trouble, My Lord, would have
 been saved me, if the Translator had quoted
 those Historians of Ireland who relate these
 Traditions. Because tho’ I thought myself
 able to be positive upon Memory, that no
 Historian of Ireland that I have seen relates
 any such thing, yet I would not trust my Me-
 mory on this Occasion. But after turning
 them all over and over, I could not find a single
 line to any such purpose. KEATING and Co-
 MERFORD inform us, that FINGAL having
 been ordered as General of the Militia to
 the Assistance of King ART the Father of
 CORMAC, and having been bribed by the
 Enemy, he not only refused to attend upon
 the King himself but also seduced his Officers
 from their Duty† : And both KEATING and
 O FLAHERTY mention the Rebellion of the
 Militia, excited by the Family of FINGAL

* Fing. ut supra.

† Keat. p. 118. Comer. p. 56.

after his Death*. It is impossible therefore for Me, My Lord, not to withhold my Assent to a Story of Traditions no body knows by whom, and reported by Historians no body knows where. Read, My Lord, what Father WALSH says in his Prospect of the State of Ireland. Speaking of FINN the Son of COMNALL, his Words are these. “ He was
 “ an Irishman both by Birth and Descent
 “ lineally come — ” and HECTOR BOETIUS
 “ might as well have turned the Knight of
 “ the Sun, or the Seven Champions, and
 “ such like Romances into the very truest
 “ Histories, as the Fables writtten of FINN
 “ the Son of COMNALL, and the Captains
 “ under him called Fiona Erion, only to en-
 “ tertain leisurable Hours and Fancies. For
 “ the Irish had their Romances too for their
 “ Divertisement. — Which yet every one of
 “ common Sense could distinguish from their
 “ Chronicles and other Monuments of real
 “ Story †”. Of this same Authority for genuine History, if not of this very Number, are all these Poems of OSSIAN relating to FINGAL and his Heroes; and in that Light I receive them with Pleasure and Admiration.

If the Translator took the foregoing Account of the Irish Traditions of the Thirty Tyrants from HANMER, as I have it not by me and cannot determine upon Memory, it is sufficient, after observing that He was

* Keat. p. 143. Ogy. p. 341.

† Walsh's Prospect, p. 51. 2.

no Historian of that Nation; to relate what KEATING says; “ that it is evident to the
 “ meanest Capacities that the Battle of Finn
 “ Tragha” — possibly the Epic Poem of FINGAL in its original state — “ tho’ it be
 “ related in some of the Chronicles of Ire-
 “ land, yet is no more than a Poetical Fic-
 “ tion, designed to entertain the Reader,
 “ and not related as a Matter of Fact;
 “ which Answer is sufficient to destroy the
 “ Credit of what He — HANMER — writes
 “ of some other Transactions which he has
 “ recorded; particularly what he writes of
 “ Fionna Errion;” i. e. FINGAL and his
 Soldiers *. But if MR. M. copied this Ac-
 count above from the Historian of his own
 Country, HECTOR BOETIUS, who is too no-
 toriously Fabulous to deserve a Perusal, no-
 thing more is necessary to overturn his Tes-
 timony, than to inform your Lordship that
 He has reported FINGAL to have been Fif-
 teen Cubits high §. No wonder the Transla-
 tor therefore should sink His Authority, if
 he did make any use of it.

It is impossible for me, My Lord, in the
 Compass of such a Letter, to establish the
 Authenticity of the Antiquities of the Irish
 Nation in so ample a manner as I am able to
 do. You are to look for that Attempt in its
 General History which I am compiling from

* Keat. pref. p. 11.

§ Walfh, p. 52. Keat. pref. ut supra. MS. péacés me.

the earliest ages. But you have now before you the several Objections I have to make, to the Historical Accounts and Explanations which the Translator of OSSIAN's Poems hath given the World: And unless we will suppose that All the Writers of Irish Affairs thro' several succeeding Ages, have agreed in the same wicked Design of imposing upon Posterity with a heap of Lies and Forgeries, these Objections are enough surely to convince your Lordship, and every other impartial Person, that the Poems are so far from being the genuine History of the Times they treat of, that they contain no History at all of that ancient and once famous People. I have already informed your Lordship, and referred you to the Places where you may find it, that there are many poetical Fictions foisted into the Chronicles that treat of FINGAL and his Heroes, which are not intended to obtain any Credit, but to relieve the Reader and embellish the History. Of this sort no doubt was FINGAL and the other Poems of OSSIAN: and therefore 'till MR. MACPHERSON will condescend to quote his Authority for the several Historical Notes he has given upon them, by which these Objections may be refuted, I must beg leave to be of Opinion, that the Irish Antiquities here recited are authentic; that all the famous Champions, CUCHULIN, FINGAL, OSSIAN, OSCAR, &c. were absolutely Irish Heroes; and that it is extremely

tremely probable — tho' I suspend my Judgment upon that Article — that all the Poems in their original Composition, were Fables finely imagined and inimitably executed by an old Irish Bard.

I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most Obedient

Humble Servant,

Barnes,
Feb. 2, 1762.

FERD. WARNER.

F I N I S.









